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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Letter dated 9 February 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour of addressing you regarding the workshop on the implementation of protection of civilians mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations in New York on 27 January 2009.

We consider that this was a very good opportunity to encourage an open, broad and constructive dialogue among all stakeholders, in order to try to move forward the debate on this issue and to work towards creating a common understanding of protection tasks, to identify the challenges of implementation and to consider ways to improve the situation.

A summary of the workshop discussions is attached (see annex). It tries to describe, briefly and objectively, the main concerns, challenges and understandings raised by the diverse participants in this event.

We hope that this document may be helpful in discussions of these issues that could eventually take place in the General Assembly or its specialized body, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

We request that this letter and its annex be circulated to all Member States as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Robert **Hill**

(*Signed*) José Luis **Cancela Gómez**

09-24049 (E) 190209

Annex to the letter dated 9 February 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Workshop on the implementation of protection of civilians mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations, New York, 27 January 2009

Summary of discussions

The Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay to the United Nations co-hosted a workshop on 27 January 2009 on the implementation of protection of civilians mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In the United Nations context, "protection of civilians" is relevant to a broad range of situations including humanitarian activities and improved access for humanitarian personnel, peacekeeping activities, peacebuilding activities, promotion of respect for the principles of international humanitarian law, and legal accountability issues. Significant progress has been made on a number of key protection issues including progress on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, the inclusion of protection tasks in a number of peacekeeping mission mandates, normative development, and steps taken to ensure the legal accountability of perpetrators of violent crimes against civilians.

In the operational context, the term "protection of civilians" refers primarily to protection tasks mandated in United Nations missions, most often requiring peacekeepers to "protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence". It is this aspect of the United Nations protection work that formed the main focus of the workshop. In addressing this aspect the workshop covered three areas:

- Understanding the mandate: What is "protection of civilians"?
- Implementing the mandate: How is the mandate being implemented? What are the challenges?
- Improving the situation: What is being done to improve the situation? What else needs to be done?

The workshop was divided into three sessions to discuss each of these aspects, with a panel discussion followed by an interactive session with workshop participants. A summary of the key issues discussed during the workshop follows.

Session 1: Understanding the mandate: what is "protection of civilians"?

The panellists agreed that an understanding of both the conflict and its actors is fundamental to the success of any peacekeeping mission, particularly a mission mandated to protect civilians. In all cases civilians are either involved directly in the conflict or used as tools of the protagonists. It is therefore important that the United Nations Security Council develop clear, credible, and achievable mandates for peacekeeping missions matched with the necessary resources, both financial and personnel. It is also important that the Security Council strive for greater inclusiveness between decision makers, the United Nations Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries, and committees such as the Fifth Committee, to ensure a clear understanding of a protection mandate, and the resources required to achieve a successful outcome.

The requirement for rapid response was also identified as essential. In too many cases United Nations deployment had not occurred in a time frame that allowed the alleviation of the suffering of civilian populations. This slow response often complicates the ability of the peacekeeping mission to successfully protect civilian populations. The United Nations ability to successfully protect civilians was viewed as requiring all elements of a peacekeeping mission including legal, political, humanitarian, peacekeeping and human rights elements. An ability to rapidly respond to developing situations together with an ability to coordinate quickly the actions of United Nations agencies was viewed as a priority concern amongst participants.

The concept of protection of civilians was also viewed as being broader than ensuring the safety of the civilian population. Consideration must be given to preserving the dignity of the population and the need to conduct protection activities in a way that enables a return to "ordinary life" as soon as possible. To this end every effort should be made to protect populations as near to their original homes as possible. Relocation to camps in neighbouring countries was considered extremely disruptive and not in the spirit of a protection of civilians mandate. An improved capacity of the United Nations to act swiftly where civilian populations are threatened will help mitigate this issue. Consent of the host country and the United Nations mission's ability to remain impartial will also assist in this regard.

It was made clear by different panellists that protection of civilians tasks — which have been mandated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1999 — do not derive from the responsibility to protect principle. Rather, they are based on the principles of international humanitarian law.

Session 2: Implementing the mandate: How is the mandate being implemented? What are the challenges?

This session focused on the difficult issue of mandate implementation. There was agreement that protection of civilians mandates are not well understood, particularly from a police and military perspective, and there is a need for clearer guidance to be provided. There was also agreement that the protection of civilians is not the exclusive province of the military. A successful outcome under a protection of civilians mandate demands a holistic approach within the mission that synergizes all the components and resources available including the country team and the host nation. Early, integrated planning involving all actors will significantly contribute to a successful outcome as it will promote ownership within the United Nations mission, the host nation and the civilian population affected.

There is also a requirement to develop and implement appropriate training programmes for peacekeepers. This would heighten the awareness and responsiveness of troop- and police-contributing countries to the responsibilities and requirements demanded by a protection of civilians mandate. Special attention should be given to protecting internally displaced persons, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plans, zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping forces, and post-conflict peacebuilding strategies.

Matching mandates with resources was considered pivotal to the success of a protection of civilians mandate. Protection of civilians mandates are considered a part of the "robust" peacekeeping missions the United Nations is being asked to deploy. Too often the mandate to protect civilians is not matched by appropriate resources or contains caveats that allow missions to only conduct this task within their capacities or in their areas of deployment. As civilian protection is required throughout a United Nations mission's area of operations it is considered imperative that resources (specifically personnel) authorized for United Nations missions with protection mandates are sufficient to enable the successful conduct of this important task for the benefit of all civilians.

The requirement to develop guidance or doctrine to assist peacekeepers conduct protection of civilians tasks was considered to be of significant importance. The guidelines should address clear articulation of the requirements of a protection of civilians mandate, strategies for the development of humanitarian space, guidance on strengthening community-based structures and community liaison, strategies for the development of focused community-based civil-military coordination projects, and guidance for the development of clear and unambiguous rules of engagement.

Session 3: Improving the situation: What is being done to improve the situation? What else needs to be done?

This session focused on the joint Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs commissioned study on protection of civilians. The study is due for release in summer 2009 and is designed as a continuation of initiatives within the United Nations Security Council to clarify the requirements of protection mandates and learn from the experiences of missions mandated to protect civilians since 1999. The study aims to:

- Identify the experiences and difficulties experienced by key actors involved in executing protection mandates.
- Identify the protection tasks required to conduct a protection of civilians mandate successfully.
- Identify best practices in the conduct of protection of civilians tasks.

- Identify and recommend strategies likely to have the greatest impact in the conduct of protection of civilians mandates.

Initial findings by the Independent Study Group indicate that credibility is a key requirement for success. If United Nations missions tasked to protect civilians are unable to do so in the early stages of deployment, the civilian population will lose confidence and spoilers will be emboldened to continue their activities. It is therefore important that appropriate resources are provided to the mission from the outset to permit rapid response to threats of violence against civilian populations. It is equally important that predeployment training, particularly for peacekeeping forces, ensures a clear understanding of the requirements of the mandate and the parameters within which peacekeeping forces can operate.

The Independent Study Group has also identified some key questions that need to be answered when mandating protection of civilians tasks:

- Does the United Nations mission have the necessary authority to conduct protection of civilians tasks?
- Does the United Nations mission have the capacity, resources, and willingness to conduct protection tasks?
- Has the United Nations mission developed a strategy that will synchronize all available agencies and resources, including with civil society and the civilian population, to ensure a successful outcome?

The Independent Study Group anticipates that the study will assist the United Nations Security Council identify the shortcomings in crafting protection of civilians mandates by examining the relationship between stated mandates and actual activities in United Nations missions over the past 10 years.

Conclusion

There is interest across a wide range of Member States in pursuing further the practical implementation of protection of civilians mandates in peacekeeping operations. Hearing from the experiences of leaders of peacekeeping missions was particularly useful. We look forward to receiving the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs commissioned independent study. We intend to conduct a further workshop, after the release of the study, to bring together Member States, field officers, and Secretariat staff to discuss the findings of the study and explore the issue further.

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 49
Sustainable development

Letter dated 17 February 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on the announcement of 2009 as the Year of Development and Improvement of the Countryside in the Republic of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could circulate the attached information as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 49, "Sustainable development".

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan

09-24125 (E) 240209 250209

Annex to the letter dated 17 February 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

2009 is declared the Year of Development and Improvement of the Countryside in Uzbekistan

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, declared 2009 the Year of Development and Improvement of the Countryside at a ceremony dedicated to the sixteenth anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Uzbek countryside is unique in its beauty and colour. The best qualities of the Uzbek people are most clearly in evidence in the countryside, whose inhabitants are noted for their generosity, simplicity and honesty. As our Head of State has said, for us the countryside represents our roots and is a symbol of our homeland. The great and sacred concept of the "Motherland" and the image of the village of our birth are inextricably linked.

Wherever the citizens of Uzbekistan live, their common destiny is linked to the countryside. For the countryside is the source of our national prosperity and our daily bread. Therefore the future success of Uzbekistan, the enhancement of its people's well-being and the fulfilment of our good intentions begin with the development of the countryside.

Ever since the first years of independence, the Head of State, Islam Karimov, has paid particular attention to addressing the problems of the countryside and improving the standard of living of its inhabitants. For example, between 1992 and 1994 the rural population received more than 400,000 hectares of land allotments, and stockbreeding has been developing apace. All of this is producing significant results. Great efforts have been made to supply gas and drinking water to the rural population and to improve the quality and level of health services.

As a result of the implementation of the objectives set out in the presidential decree of 10 November 1998 on the State programme for reform of the health-care system in the Republic of Uzbekistan, more than 3,100 rural health posts with modern diagnostic and therapeutic equipment have been set up. The effectiveness of public health and prophylactic services has improved.

Reforms aimed at promoting the physical and spiritual education of young people have been effective and have produced significant results. Today, modern academic high schools, vocational colleges, schools and sports facilities have been built in Uzbekistan's most remote villages. Since the beginning of 2008 alone, 149 vocational colleges, 634 comprehensive schools and 184 children's sport centres have come into operation, most of them located in rural areas.

Ongoing attention is being paid to the development of services in the countryside. Recently, thousands of facilities for trade, catering, consumer services and vehicle repairs have opened. Extensive efforts have been made to establish a network of services for farms, to provide microcredit and consumer loans and to improve the payment system.

The economic basis for the efforts under way in Uzbekistan to boost creativity, provide amenities and improve the provision of materials and equipment for the education, health and social security systems — in general, the huge changes taking place in all areas of life — are inextricably linked with the development of the agricultural sector.

The President's particular interest in the transfer of land to farmers and the development of the agrarian movement is producing results. For example, although 2008 was a relatively difficult year for Uzbek farmers, the country's cereal growers still produced 6,175,000 tons of grain.

Today any farmer will tell you that the progress we have made has been driven by the introduction of new economic and social relations, most importantly the transfer of land to its rightful owners, a profound sense of ownership among farmers and a change in their relationship with the land and the fruits of their labour.

In 2008, the agricultural sector grew by 104.5 per cent, and production of vine crops, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, meat, milk and eggs has been increasing from year to year.

In 2008, more than 16,000 head of cattle were auctioned to the public. More than 18,000 families were provided with cows free of charge. The overall number of cattle increased by 6.9 per cent compared with 2007. Similar positive results were achieved in horticulture, winegrowing, fish farming and other areas.

The current goal is to improve the standard of living of the rural population and to continue the intensive development of agriculture and improve its efficiency.

In this new year, 2009, which President Islam Karimov has declared the Year of Development and Improvement of the Countryside, the practical work carried out in this regard will be expanded even further.

A special State programme has been elaborated, focusing in particular on raising the standard of living in the countryside, improving the legal basis for the protection of the interests of rural people, enhancing cultural life in rural areas, providing employment for the rural population, in particular young people, and boosting people's income and well-being. There is no doubt that the achievement of these aims will help to improve further the image of the Uzbek countryside and to raise the standard of living for its inhabitants.

Specific plans have been drawn up for more comprehensive reforms in agriculture, support for the agrarian movement, protection of the interests of owners, entrepreneurs and businesspeople, improvement of the condition of reclaimed land, protection of public health, improvement of the public's health awareness, provision of better equipment for the health system, and expansion and mandatory implementation of qualitative health indicators.

The following are just a few examples of the objectives that have been set. In 2009, repairs will be carried out on 1,913.9 kilometres of public roads in rural areas and, in order to improve public transport services, 67 new bus routes will also be put in place for rural inhabitants. In 2009, 168 children's sports facilities will be constructed or modernized in rural areas. There is a plan to build six academic high schools, 164 vocational colleges and 65 comprehensive schools. Through the development of the service sector in rural areas, in particular the establishment of

retail, catering and consumer service outlets, it is expected that 140,000 new jobs will be created.

The food crisis of 2008 demonstrated the strategic importance of rural development. The State programme for food security, in particular grain security, adopted in 1992 on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, has proved its worth. Uzbekistan has become an exporter rather than an importer of grain. Before 1995, more than 2 million tons of grain was imported each year, but in 1995 Uzbekistan became self-sufficient in grain, and in recent years it has exported more than 1 million tons to such countries as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and others.

Moreover, Uzbekistan is now fully self-sufficient in all basic foodstuffs: grain, meat, milk, potatoes and others. It is now the largest exporter of fruit and vegetables among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Of the 6 million tons of vegetables, fruit and grapes produced in Uzbekistan every year, up to 2 million tons is exported to the Republic of Korea, countries in the CIS and the European Union, and a number of other States.

In the context of global climate change and violent fluctuations in the world food market, which are affecting farming in unpredictable and negative ways, Uzbekistan's ability not only to provide itself with food but also to be one of the largest exporters in the Central and South Asian region is helping to bolster world food security.

Uzbekistan fully shares the view of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), set out in its report *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2008*, that efforts to address the food crisis should focus on small-scale farmers. "In the medium-to-long term, the focus should be on strengthening the agriculture sectors of developing countries ... This is essential not only to face the current crisis, but also to respond to the increasing demand for food, feed and biofuel production and to prevent the recurrence of such crises in the future."

2009 — the Year of Development and Improvement of the Countryside — will undoubtedly be one of the most prosperous and successful years yet for the Uzbek people.